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CHAPTER 6

Suffering in silence: victims of rape on the tragic stage

P. J. Finglass

One of the most moving scenes in Sophocles takes place immediately after the first choral song of his *Trachiniae* (141–496). To the chorus, who have entered to console Deianira as she longs for the return of her husband Heracles, Deianira describes the sorrows of marriage; in her view, marriage brings pain to a woman because it constantly causes her anxiety for her husband or her children. A Messenger suddenly enters with good news: Heracles is alive, having recently triumphed in a battle, and is shortly to return. At Deianira's encouragement the chorus sing a lyric of joy; then another messenger, Lichas, enters, bringing with him a crowd of women, spoil from Eurytus' city Oechalia, which Heracles has recently sacked, holding Eurytus responsible for his year-long servitude to the Lydian queen Omphale. Despite her happiness, Deianira expresses her pity for these women, who have so recently made the awful transition from slave to free. One in particular catches her eye, a young woman of particularly striking appearance: she asks Lichas who she is and who her parents are, but he claims to know nothing.

After Lichas takes the women inside, the original Messenger intervenes, telling Deianira that the cause of Heracles' sack of Oechalia was not his time in Lydia, but his passion for Eurytus' daughter Iole, whom Eurytus refused to hand over to him as his concubine. When Lichas re-enters, keen to return to Heracles, the Messenger questions him closely about the young woman's identity; he continues to deny knowledge of her, though it becomes clear that he is lying. Deianira herself now intervenes, telling Lichas that he should

speak the truth: she has coped with Heracles' infidelities in the past, and in any case feels compassion for the beautiful woman whose looks have destroyed her life. Lichas admits that he had been lying to protect her feelings; Deianira takes him inside to present him with gifts and a message to Heracles.

The heart of this complex and affecting scene, full of dramatic revelations and powerful displays of emotion, lies at the meeting of Deianira with the as yet nameless Iole.

As Deianira says, addressing the chorus:

έμοι γάρ οἶκτος δεινός εισέβη, φίλαι,
ταύτας ὀρώσῃ δυσπότμους ἐπὶ ξένης
χώρας ἀοίκους ἀπάτοράς τ' ἄλωμένας, 300
αἱ πρὶν μὲν ἦσαν ἐξ ἐλευθέρων ἴσως
ἀνδρῶν, τανῦν δὲ δοῦλον ἴσχουσιν βίον.
ὦ Ζεῦ τροπαῖε, μή ποτ' εἰσίδοιμί σε
πρὸς τοῦμόν οὔτω σπέρμα χωρήσαντά ποι,
μηδ', εἴ τι δράσεις, τῇσδέ γε ζώσης ἔτι. 305
οὕτως ἐγὼ δέδοικα τάσδ' ὀρωμένη.
ὦ δυστάλαινα, τίς ποτ' εἴ νεανίδων;
ἄνανδρος, ἢ τεκνοῦσσα; πρὸς μὲν γὰρ φύσιν
πάντων ἄπειρος τῶνδε, γενναία δέ τις.
Λίχα, τίνος ποτ' ἐστὶν ἡ ξένη βροτῶν; 310
τίς ἡ τεκοῦσα, τίς δ' ὁ φιτύσας πατήρ;
ἔξευτ' ἐπεὶ νιν τῶνδε πλεῖστον ὤικτισα
βλέπουσ', ὅσωπερ καὶ φρονεῖν οἶδεν μόνη.

A terrible sense of pity has come upon me, my friends, as I see these ill-fated women wandering to a foreign land, deprived of their home and deprived of their fathers – women

who before, perhaps, were the offspring of free men, but who now have the life of a slave. O Zeus who turns battles, may I never see you approaching my seed in this way, or if you will do so, do not while I am still alive! That is the fear that I have as I behold them. O wretched woman, who among girls are you? Are you unmarried, or a mother? As regards your appearance you are without experience in all these matters, but you are some noble person. Lichas, who among mortals does the foreign woman belong to? Who is her mother, who the father who begot her? Speak out – since I pitied her most of these when I saw her, in as much as she alone knows how to behave.

Soph. *Tr.* 298–313

Deianira begins by surveying the women as a whole, before focussing on the sorrow of one particular, distinctive girl. How exactly this was staged we cannot say;¹ but somehow Iole must have been distinguished from the mass of girls brought in by Lichas. The final line of Deianira's speech suggests that either Iole's mask, or her deportment, set her apart – for without some such physical indication, it is hard to see how Deianira could have made this inference about her character.

A great part of the tension rests in Iole's silence. The audience would not be expecting Iole to speak, at least in the present scene, since three speaking actors were already on stage and a fourth was not normally permitted by the rules of the contest.² Yet for a non-speaking character, Iole becomes the focus of attention to an unusual degree, especially as she is (from one perspective) merely one of a group of women who have just entered the stage. The very refusal of the rules of the genre to allow her to speak is poignant, especially

¹ See Mastronarde 1979: 76–7, Easterling 1982 on 313 for suggestions.

² It was not completely unprecedented for such a non-speaking actor to speak – Pylades' dramatic intervention in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (900–2), a play which otherwise has only two speaking characters on stage, is proof of that – but the solitary nature of that exception means that we can fairly talk about a rule.

when the full story of her life becomes known: she is the wretched victim of Heracles' passion, the object of lust who, through no personal fault, has brought destruction on her father's city and on the women whom the audience can see processing across the stage. Like Deianira, Iole passively suffers the consequences of *erôs*; both are victims, in their own way, of the unbridled force of Heracles' lust.³ Yet unlike Deianira, whose eloquence and individual speaking style contribute so much to the drama's overall impact, she is given no voice to express her sorrow. Because of Deianira's perseverance in her compassion for Iole even after it is discovered that she is her rival, Iole's pitiable state does not go undescribed, despite her silence; indeed, one scholar even comments that Iole's speaking 'would in fact be unnecessary, since Deianeira attributes her own feelings to her to such an extent that she effectively speaks for her.'⁴ Deianira's capacity to speak for both women establishes her as a truly empathetic person, cognisant of the feelings even of a silent rival; by the end of the play, the contrast with the articulate but entirely self-centred Heracles, who lacks concern for the feelings even of his own son, will be clear. Yet Iole's very silence, too, has its own eloquence; in a scene where deceit is so prominent, her saying nothing provides an all too reliable testimony to her innocent victimhood, to her inability to combat the mighty forces in which she has been caught up.

³ Cf. Wohl 1998: 17–18 'Iole is in the play's present what Deianira was in the past . . . The sublimation of Deianira as Iole is facilitated by the many parallels between the two women', which she goes on to describe, and Foley 2001: 95 'Iole is a younger double of herself, as each incurred suffering due to their beauty (465, 523–28)'. See also Thumiger 2013: 34–5 on *erôs* and sexual jealousy in *Trachiniae*, and MCHARDY (pp. YYY) for this phenomenon in tragedy more generally.

⁴ Mossman 2012: 496.

The meeting between Deianira and Iole has often been compared to the confrontation between Clytemnestra and Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*,⁵ a play which *Trachiniae* presupposes in various ways and whose first performance, we can safely say, must have preceded it, though probably not by long.⁶ Aeschylus' Cassandra is brought back from Troy by Agamemnon as the spoils of war, just as Iole is Heracles' prize from the sack of Oechalia; the advent of this concubine precedes (and to varying extents brings about) the destruction of her recently-acquired master at the hands of his spouse.⁷ There are differences between the two, naturally. So Iole is sent on ahead by Heracles, but Agamemnon arrives with Cassandra in his train; and Cassandra's concubinage is a by-product of the Trojan War, whereas Iole's was the whole purpose of Heracles' endeavour. One fundamental similarity, however, involves the silence of the two women when confronted by the rival which each could potentially displace. As we have seen, Iole makes no response to Deianira's inquiries, which have to be answered, falsely, by Lichas. So too, Cassandra ignores Clytemnestra, making no reply to her words and disobeying her demands to come into the house. The queen is confused, wondering whether Cassandra can speak Greek at all; in the end she herself returns inside, unsuccessful in her purpose for the first and only time.

⁵ Aesch. Ag. 1035–68. See Kapsomenos 1963: 68–79, Mastronarde 1979: 76, Easterling 2005: 31, Davidson 2005: 206–7 (putting the silence of Iole and Cassandra in the context of other effective silences), Wohl 1998: 110–11, Montiglio 2000: 213, Mossman 2005: 354–5, 2012: 495–5, Rood 2010: 358, de Paco Serrano 2011: 137 (highlighting Cassandra's connexions with other tragic figures, including Iole), Coe 2013a: 358–9, Mattison 2015.

⁶ Webster 1936a: 168, 177, Easterling 1982: 21–2. For the relatively early date of *Trachiniae* see Finglass 2011: 1–11; relative, that is, to the other surviving plays, since if the play does date to 457 or later Sophocles would already have had more than a decade's experience as a playwright.

⁷ See Sanders 2013: 56 n. 68 on the 'rival for legitimate wife' scenario in tragedy.

The effect of this allusion has been much discussed. For one scholar, it ‘serves to emphasize the difference between the two women already so clear by the contrast in their language: Clytaemestra the great manipulator of words, Deianeira the hesitant one, stumbling and sometimes rambling’;⁸ for another, whose more positive description of Deianira seems more persuasive, her ‘understanding and gentleness are at the opposite extreme from Clytemnestra’s smoldering hatred. In Deianeira Sophocles’ audience could recognize the humane spirit of fifth-century civility at its best . . . The woman whose situation she recalls, however, is a figure whose raw power, violent passion, immense hyperboles are in touch still with the rougher energies of a harsher, heroic age.’⁹ From the point of view of this chapter, the silences in both scenes particularly repay comparison. In Aeschylus the young concubine is at first silent, baffling and defeating her conqueror’s wife, and thus technically her rival; subsequently she sings and speaks, with a startling eloquence which her auditors, the chorus, nevertheless find impossible to understand.¹⁰ Sophocles’ twist on this scene in *Trachiniae* involves presenting the concubine as silent throughout. Iole’s encounter with Deianira, which makes up the whole of her on-stage part, corresponds to Cassandra’s with Clytemnestra (the latter’s exchange with the chorus finds no place in Sophocles, except insofar as the chorus explicitly pity Cassandra at 1069, immediately after Clytemnestra departs, just as Deianira’s reaction to Iole is one of compassion); but whereas Aeschylus’ queen is manifestly defeated by the concubine, in Sophocles the point is rather the extraordinary understanding and

⁸ Mossman 2012: 496.

⁹ Segal 1995: 40. Cf. Webster 1936a: 168 ‘We are meant to compare the true nobility of Deianira with the superficial sympathy, the pride and brutality of Clytaemnestra’, Easterling 2005: 31.

¹⁰ Aeschylus would become famous for characters who spoke only some time after their original entrance, especially at the start of the play (cf. Ar. *Ran.* 832–4, 911–30 with Dover 1993 on 911–12); for an intriguing instance from the *Iliad* see the discussion of that poem’s Helen in H. Roisman 2006.

sympathy that Deianira shows towards the woman who has shared her husband's bed, a sympathy all the more poignant because it arises purely out of Deianira's nature, not through any persuasive verbal power exerted by Iole.

The precise reasons for Iole's silence are not explored, but her failure to say anything hardly conveys defiance; if anything, it rather suggests a woman completely traumatised, a passive victim who has in no way recovered from her experience.¹¹ And although Sophocles' play shows a 'conversation' in which only one party speaks, it is hard to imagine an ordinary interlocutor taking as much account of a fellow participant in a conversation as Deianira does of Iole and her suffering; we are a world away from the sharp commands of Clytemnestra. Sophocles thus evokes the Aeschylean scene but directs the format towards his own poetic purpose.¹² The decision to move the subordinate character in the direction of permanent rather than temporary silence shows a (merited) confidence in his ability to create an emotional encounter between two characters only one of whom actually says anything.

In 2016 a papyrus of Sophocles' *Tereus* was published which sheds new light on the scene from *Trachiniae* and its portrayal of a silently suffering woman. *Tereus* described how Tereus, king of Thrace and husband of the Athenian princess Procne, rapes Procne's sister Philomela while bringing her from Athens to Thrace in response to her sister's desire to see her; he additionally cuts out her tongue to prevent her from denouncing him. In time the sisters meet, and Philomela uses weaving to inform her sister what has happened to her; they

¹¹ Rood 2010: 361 takes a more optimistic view, arguing that while 'most readers pass over Iole's silence with the assumption that it approximates the impossibility of articulating the boundlessness of her despair and isolation . . . her plot, like her silence, remains open-ended, with the promise of new life in a new generation'; but that takes too sanguine a position with regard to her forthcoming union with Hyllus (see p. YYY below).

¹² Cf. Mattison 2015: 13 'Sophocles re-focuses the scene where wife meets concubine so that it becomes entirely centred not on questions of power and control but on questions of marriage, family, and love.'

conspire to kill Tereus' son by Procne, Itys, and serve him as a meal to his father. Once he discovers the truth, he pursues them, and all three are turned by the gods into birds: Tereus into a hoopoe, Procne and Philomela into a nightingale and a swallow respectively.

The papyrus overlaps with a twelve-line fragment quoted by the fifth-century paroemiographer Stobaeus; quotation and papyrus together yield the following text:

<Πρόκνη>	. . .	
	<p>νῦν δ' οὐδέν εἰμι χωρίς. ἀλλὰ πολλάκις ἐβλεψα ταύτηι τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν, ὥς οὐδέν ἐσμεν. αἱ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς ἡδιστον, οἶμαι, ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον· τερπνῶς γὰρ ἀεὶ παῖδας ἀνοία τρέφει.</p>	5
	<p>ὅταν δ' ἐς ἡβὴν ἐξικώμεθ' ἔμφρονες, ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα θεῶν πατρώων τῶν τε φυσάντων ἄπο, αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους, αἱ δ' εἰς ἀήθλη δώμαθ', αἱ δ' ἐπίρροθα. καὶ ταῦτ', ἐπειδὴν εὐφρόνη ζεύξει μία, χρεῶν ἐπαλινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.</p>	10
	<p>νόμωι μὲν [εἰ δ' ἐκ τοιοῦ[ἴδοιμι καὶ[</p>	15
Χο<ρός>	<p>ἀλλ' εὖ τελ[χρηστήν φ[</p>	
Ποιμ<ήν>	δέσποινα[] [

	θέλων τι[20
<Πρόκνη>	οὐκουν δ.[
	λόγων με[
<Ποιμήν>	ὄρκον γαρ.[
	φράσειν α[
<Πρόκνη>	λέξασα..[25
	κοινων..[
<Ποιμήν>	εἶρπον μ[
	ἀλλ' ἐξ ἄγρα[ς	
	ὅς ἡμιν ερ.[
	στείχων δ[30
	ἔνθεν χοα[
	ἔστην ὑπο[
	τερραμν' ὑπ[
].παρ.[
	...	
[Procne]	<p>... As it is, I am nothing on my own. But I have often regarded the nature of women in this way, seeing that we amount to nothing. In childhood in our father's house we live the happiest life, I think, of all mankind; for folly always rears children in happiness. But when we have understanding and have come to womanhood, we are pushed out and sold, away from our paternal gods and from our parents, some to foreign husbands, some to barbarians, some to unfamiliar homes, and some to homes that are opprobrious. And this, once a single night has yoked us, we must approve and consider to be a good thing ... custom. But if after such ... I should ... see ... too. For what ...</p>	
Chorus:	Well, ... end ... good ...	
Shepherd:	Lady ... wishing ... something ...	

[Procne:] Then . . . words . . .

[Shepherd:] . . . an oath . . . shall speak . . .

[Procne:] By speaking . . . For . . . shared . . .

[Shepherd:] I was making my way . . . but from a hunt . . . who . . . to us . . . things . . .

 Travelling . . . from where libations . . . I stood ?under . . . hut . . .

Soph. *Tereus* fr. 583+P.Oxy. 5292¹³

The twelve lines quoted by Stobaeus (lines 1–12 above) make up one of the best known fragments of Greek tragedy: a woman’s lament, addressed to other women, about the miseries of marriage as experienced by a woman. The lines seem so sincere, and so affecting, that it is easy to forget that they were written by a man, for delivery by a man, before audiences that probably had a preponderance of males.¹⁴ ‘We do not know the context of this speech’, lamented Bernard Knox;¹⁵ but the papyrus now gives us an insight into precisely that. For while at first sight the extra text granted us by the sands of Egypt is less than impressive (not a single complete line, not a single piece of what we might think of as striking poetry), this precious find turns out to be most revealing as regards the construction of the drama.¹⁶ It confirms that the speech is delivered by Procne, as had long been thought: no other female character in a *Tereus* play could be addressed ‘mistress’ (δέσποινα) by a shepherd. It reveals that her speech is delivered to the chorus, and no-one else; for if another auditor were present, it would be astonishing for such a friend to utter no words of

¹³ Text from Finglass 2016b: 63, translation from *ibid.* 82 (where in addition some *exempli gratia* supplements are also translated). For the editio princeps see Slattery 2016.

¹⁴ For the gender composition of tragic audiences see Finglass 2017b: 314–17.

¹⁵ Knox 1977: 221 = 1979: 312. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 237, cited in COO AND FINGLASS above, p. YYY.

¹⁶ The account that follows of what we can infer from the papyrus is an abbreviated version of the argument set out in Finglass 2016b: 66–75. For subsequent discussion see Libatique 2018, COO, pp. YYY.

consolation in response to Procne's sentiments. It shows that Procne is unaware of any suffering undergone by her sister at this point: for if she possessed such knowledge, or even suspected anything of the sort, she would certainly have referred to this towards the end of her speech rather than conclude with general reflections on the state of married women; and yet the papyrus indicates that she delivers only four lines beyond the section preserved by Stobaeus, four lines which cannot be restored so as to mention any suffering by her sister. This additionally suggests that Procne's speech comes from early in the drama, because her discovery of her sister's experience led to the main action and so cannot have occurred late within it;¹⁷ since the prologue is not a possibility (because the chorus are already on stage), the speech probably occurred in the first episode, immediately after the chorus's entrance song, which is where we find comparable speeches from Deianira in *Trachiniae* and Medea in Euripides' play.¹⁸

Moreover, the papyrus shows that after her speech, a new arrival, a Shepherd, enters to bring Procne news grave enough to prompt him to swear an oath as to its truth. While the nature of that news cannot be established for certain, a highly attractive possibility is that it involves the discovery of the mutilated Philomela. It is not clear what other serious news would suit this myth and the Shepherd's desire to confirm his message with an oath; moreover, the fragmentary word 'hut' in line 33, if correctly restored (and no alternative has so far been proposed) would fit such a scenario perfectly, since that hut could be where Philomela had been confined after the rape. Such imprisonment is attested in other versions

¹⁷ Sophocles' *Electra*, where the mutual recognition of Electra and Orestes takes place at a very late stage, is no counterexample; in that play Orestes' vengeance plot is underway at the opening of the drama, since Clytemnestra's offence is already well known, whereas in *Tereus* the conspiracy cannot begin until Procne learns of Philomela's suffering.

¹⁸ Milo 2008: 38–9. For Tereus and Medea see Finglass 2016b: 77–9, 2019b: 17.

of the myth; the evidence of the papyrus suggests that it originated with Sophocles. And if that is correct, we may additionally infer that the Shepherd's speech to Procne announcing Philomela's discovery (whether or not the Shepherd correctly identified her) was followed not long afterwards by Philomela's arrival on stage, brought either by the Shepherd himself or by associates of his. The basic framework of the story, whereby the two sisters Procne and Philomela conspire to punish Tereus by killing Itys, his son by Procne, requires the sisters to meet; and if, as it seems, Philomela's discovery is only now being announced, that meeting has not yet taken place, and so must happen before long.

The upshot is that Procne is confronted first with a messenger, announcing important news, followed by the entrance of a woman who, through no fault of her own, has shared her husband's bed: exactly the same basic structure which we find in *Trachiniae*, and indeed in *Agamemnon*. That encounter between the two women will have been an extraordinary moment in *Tereus*, just as the comparable scene is in *Trachiniae*.¹⁹ In both cases, the women's encounter leads to action by the first woman which wreaks a terrible punishment on her husband. And in both cases, only one of the women speaks. If *Tereus* had survived and *Trachiniae* were fragmentary, we would not have known this for sure; Iole's silence is the consequence of Sophocles' personal dramatic choice, not a mandatory part of the story. But because the cutting out of Philomela's tongue was an essential element of the myth, and indeed is all but confirmed for Sophocles' play by the fragment preserved by Aristotle that refers to 'the voice of the shuttle' (κερκίδος φωνή, fr. 595), we may infer that Philomela said nothing during the dramatic reunion with her sister.²⁰ Exactly how that encounter was staged

¹⁹ Finglass 2016b: 76–7.

²⁰ Hartman 1969: 240 = 1970: 337 asks of this fragment 'What gives these words power to speak to us even without the play?'; the papyrus may not restore the play, but it at least hints at the dramatic context in which the weaving featured.

cannot be determined; but given that Philomela was an active participant in the plot against Tereus (her metamorphosis would make no sense otherwise, and indeed fr. 589.1–2 refers to unspecified ‘women’ having acted even more mindlessly than Tereus himself), she must signalled her participation through assenting gestures. Her pitiful silence would have been accompanied by eloquent speeches on the part of her sister, expressing both her distress and her plan for revenge; the chorus too must have voiced their opinion of the conspiracy.

The formal similarity between the scenes in *Tereus* and *Trachiniae* is so striking that it is fair to posit an allusion by the later play to the earlier. Which came first, however, we cannot say for sure. Perhaps *Trachiniae* is more likely, partly because it is probably relatively early in Sophocles’ oeuvre,²¹ partly because *Tereus* was satirised in Aristophanes’ *Birds* of 414 and so (we might imagine) unlikely to predate *Birds* by forty years or more. Yet nothing prevents *Tereus* from coming from some time before 457 (the earliest possible year for *Trachiniae*); and Aristophanes satirises one play fully thirty-three years after its first performance,²² so a gap of forty years or more cannot be ruled out, not least as Sophoclean plays, perhaps including *Tereus*, were already seeing reperformances in the fifth century.²³ *Trachiniae* indeed briefly references the Procne myth, when the chorus compare Deianira in her longing for Heracles to ‘some wretched bird’ (οἷά τιν’ ἄθλιον ὄρνιν, 105), which can only be the nightingale,²⁴ though that does not tell us anything about chronology: the nightingale’s lament was already an established part of the mythological tradition by this time,²⁵ and Sophocles could have used it in *Trachiniae* without previously having composed a *Tereus*.

²¹ See n. 6 above.

²² Wright 2012: 147 refers (among others) to how Euripides’ *Telephus* of 438 is satirised in *Frogs* of 405.

²³ Finglass 2015a, Lamari 2017: 35–8.

²⁴ Wohl 1998: 204 n. 66.

²⁵ Hes. *Op.* 568, Finglass 2007 on Soph. *El.* 107, Weiss 2017.

Accordingly, the discussion in this chapter takes no view either way on the issue of relative priority.

Whichever way round the plays were chronologically, in each case the differing treatments of female silence would have encouraged comparison of the two dramas by attentive spectators. In *Trachiniae*, at least, silence has a broader thematic significance. So the Deianira who encounters the silent Iole was herself once the passive prize of Heracles' might, sitting silently during the noisy contest between the hero and Achelous for her hand;²⁶ and later in the play Deianira's return to silence, remarked on by the Chorus (813–14), will mark the destruction of her hopes and imminent end of her life. In *Tereus*, the two women will themselves be reduced to silence at the play's end, or at least silence as far as human speech is concerned, through their metamorphosis into birds; but to what degree the play explicitly employed silence as a thematic feature, here or elsewhere, remains unknown.

Silence in each play causes problems of communication whose ultimate source lies in the male offender's actions. In *Trachiniae* Heracles does not instruct Lichas to lie to Deianira (479–83), but nevertheless acts in such a way that his herald, terrified by Deianira's likely response, feels that his only choice is to keep the truth from her. In *Tereus*, by contrast, the removal of Philomela's tongue, and her seclusion in a hut, are both intended to ensure, with the greatest possible security, that she never reveals what has happened to her. (Both plays

²⁶ Cf. Kitzinger 2012: 123 'Iole's silence . . . makes her an unknown whose point of view we are free to imagine . . . there is in Iole's silence the same kind of fear that we witnessed in Deianeira', Rood 2010. There is no explicit reference to silence in the relevant passage (517/18–530), but it seems nevertheless to be implied by the juxtaposition of sonic terms describing the battle (πάταγος, στόνος; 'the duel itself was a confusion of violence and noise', as Easterling 1982 remarks on 517–30) with their complete absence in the depiction of Deianira. There may even be a shift in the sound of the Greek, with a profusion of hard consonants, particularly velars, in the battle description, which are toned down in the section that follows.

involve different mixtures of force and deceit throughout. So while Iole and Philomela have both been taken from their fathers, the former is seized by force, resulting in the sacking of her city and enslavement of her people, whereas the latter is entrapped through guile; yet Lichas' lies ensure that truth and falsehood are prominent motifs in *Trachiniae* too, while Tereus does even more violence to Philomela's person than Heracles does to Iole.) The truth eventually comes out, in both cases at least partly by chance – thanks to the first Messenger in *Trachiniae*, who just happens to come to Deianira with the news of Heracles' return, and so was in a position to give her a true account after Lichas' deceit; and through the fortunate discovery by the Shepherd in *Tereus* of the abused woman in a hut in the countryside, which he seems to have stumbled across when wandering the fields on the way back from a hunting expedition. The problem of Iole's silence is then overcome when the Messenger speaks on her behalf; Philomela, by contrast, uses weaving to communicate the reason for her distress, taking advantage of the opportunity with which chance had provided her. Such weaving may have taken place off stage, presumably during a choral ode. (Alternatively, Philomela brought with her a piece of weaving, or had it brought on by the Shepherd or an associate before she came on stage, but it is hard to see what opportunity she would have had to fashion such an item; Tereus will hardly have equipped her hut with a loom.) As a result *Tereus*, like *Trachiniae*, involves a piece of cloth wielded by a woman with fatal consequences for a man – one cloth steeped in the blood of a centaur (himself an attempted rapist: *Tr.* 562–5), the other embroidered with the barbarous deeds of a monster.²⁷

The destructive plan that follows the encounter of each pair of women involves in one of the plays, but not in the other, the silent woman's participation. Just as Philomela actively reveals her suffering to her sister, so too she joins in the conspiracy against Tereus. Iole, on

²⁷ Here too *Agamemnon* remains parallel to the Sophoclean dramas, Clytemnestra's slaying of Agamemnon being assisted by the dreadful robe in which she enfolds him (Finglass 2017d).

the other hand, remains passive: just as she took no steps to communicate her treatment at Heracles' hands, so too the reaction to this news (i.e. the sending of the robe) comes solely from Deianira, with no involvement from her. That suits a plan, of course, intended not to destroy Heracles or to punish him for his rape of Iole (or disrespect of Deianira), but to restore his love for Deianira, a love recently diverted in the direction of the younger woman. But each plan leads to destruction, even though that is intended in only one of the dramas. Assisted by Philomela, Procne makes a tragic choice in full knowledge to kill her child. Deianira, by contrast, is merely mistaken, and acts to restore good relations between herself and her husband rather than to rupture them for good. That does not mean, however, that audiences would have found only Deianira's plight sympathetic. Procne endures an appalling trauma in learning that her sister was raped and mutilated by her own husband; the audience indeed sees her discover this on stage, witnessing its emotional impact unmitigated by the passage of time. Her decision, grim though it is, becomes at least understandable; moreover, the involvement of her sister Philomela would have had the same effect, making the killing of Itys not just the murder of an innocent child (though it would be that), but also the sole means whereby a pair of abused women could achieve any kind of redress. Unable to speak, and sexually violated, Philomela was nevertheless capable of inflicting a merited punishment on her abuser: amid all the suffering, there is at least some satisfaction, however appalling, in that.²⁸

The location of these women is also of crucial importance in the audience's reactions to them. Each play emphasises how the action is set far from the women's homeland. Early in *Trachiniae* Deianira remarks 'we live at a stranger's house here in Trachis, driven away' (ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐν Τραχῖνι τῇιδ' ἀνάστατοι | ξένωι παρ' ἀνδρὶ ναίομεν), where of ἀνάστατοι Jebb

²⁸ Finglass 2016b: 78–9.

remarks ‘the word would not suit a voluntary migration’.²⁹ As Segal says, ‘The setting of the play in remote Trachis and the lack of indications of civic life add to this sense of the suspension or precariousness of normal civilized procedures. The Sophoclean Trachis appears as something of a frontier town, a place in which to envisage the breakdown of the most fundamental institution of society. Here both Deianeira and Heracles release their potential sexual violence, covertly and indirectly in the one case, shamelessly and with gross disregard for human lives in the other.’³⁰ The same word highlighted by Jebb is used later when Lichas tells Deianira how Heracles ‘captured with his spear the land, so that it was sacked, of the women whom you see with your eyes’ (ἤρει τῶνδ’ ἀνάστατον δορὶ | χώραν γυναικῶν ὧν ὁρᾷς ἐν ὄμμασιν, 240–1): ‘Deianeira and Iole are both “uprooted” . . . : the repetition draws attention to the thematically important equivalence between the situations of the two women.’³¹ Both women, thanks to Heracles, are away from their οἶκος, the usual locus of female activity, and both are diminished as a consequence; the male relatives on whom they could rely are distant or defeated.

The little that we have of *Tereus* indicates that location played an important part in that drama too. Procne’s lament ‘we are pushed out and sold, away from our paternal gods and from our parents, some to foreign husbands, some to barbarians, some to unfamiliar homes, and some to homes that are opprobrious’ (7–10), although nominally a comment on the fate of all married women, has particular relevance to herself, a princess forced to leave Athens to live in the far-off and scarcely civilised land of Thrace; her dissatisfaction with day-to-day life there gives initial impetus to the plot, and is soon found to be all too justified when the very king of the country rapes her sister. That rape takes place on a journey that

²⁹ *Tr.* 39–40 with Jebb 1892 *ad loc.*

³⁰ Segal 1995: 92.

³¹ Buxton 1995: 9.

never reaches its intended conclusion, since Philomela is abandoned in the wild by Tereus rather than being taken to the palace to see her sister. Being outside the house gives Tereus, as it does Heracles, freedom both to indulge his depraved character and to keep his wife ignorant of his activities abroad; Procne and Philomela, on the other hand, like Deianira and Iole, are far from any of the usual sources of help to which they might turn, and find themselves virtually trapped in a land that is scarcely Greek, and whose civilisational deficiencies are personified in its ruler.

So Buxton's remark that 'developments in anthropology have alerted us to the uneasy tension between the barbarous and the civilized, the wild outside and the sheltered inside, which runs through *Trachiniae*', and growing scepticism about Sophoclean piety has enabled us to respond with more accuracy to the play's bleak dramatic landscape'³² applies just as well to *Tereus*, we might think. In addition, though, the isolation of the two women lends powerful justification to their course of action, alone as they are in the land of their enemy. Philomela's enforced silence and confinement are metaphorically emblematic of the sisters' situation: even after they meet, they remain confined in a far-off land, with no friends to respond to a cry for help.

The association of Iole with Aeschylus' Cassandra explored above prompts the question whether Philomela too can usefully be compared with the Trojan prophetess. The Tereus myth is invoked in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, when Cassandra is likened by Clytemnestra to the swallow, and by the chorus to the nightingale (1050–2, 1140–5); Cassandra rejects the latter comparison, noting that she, unlike Procne, will be executed, without the consolation of metamorphosis (1146–9). The comparison is significant: 'It is no surprise that Clytemnestra, mistress of deceiving words, should employ the conventional

³² Buxton 1995: 32.

trope when she remarks that Cassandra speaks with a swallow's tongue. Like Philomela, Cassandra has had her ability to communicate wrested from her. Her voice and her visions of butchery prophesy the coming carnage: that which the audience both knows and awaits. But within the twisted world of the play the Chorus, echoing the Trojans before them, cannot understand her plainest statements.³³ And as discussed in the case of *Trachiniae* above, *Tereus* does not need to predate *Agamemnon* for the reference to the myth to be understood, familiar as it was at the time; similarly, we can examine links between the three plays without taking a view on whether *Tereus* preceded one, both, or neither. A couple of points can be highlighted, although the possibilities run much more widely.

First, all three dramas play with the idea of female powerlessness. The silent female initially seems in each play a mere victim, without even the resource of speech to defend herself, unable to do more than passively endure the violence of men. Yet in *Agamemnon*, Cassandra will turn out to be the only person who understands the true history of the house of Atreus and its significance, and correctly prophesies that her death at Clytemnestra's hands will be avenged (1279–81). In *Trachiniae* the voiceless Iole prompts in Deianira a profound worry that she is losing her husband's love, leading her to send the fatal robe which destroys the man who had seized Iole, destroying her people in order to do so; news of Heracles' agony prompts Deianira to kill herself, and as a result Hyllus regards Iole as solely responsible for his mother's death (μόνη | μεταίτιος, 1233–4), though that is an emotional response to the terrible situation, not a dispassionate judgment of Iole's culpability. In *Tereus* Philomela actively joins forces with her sister to punish her brother-in-law and rapist. The degree of agency demonstrated by each of the women differs across the three dramas, but

³³ J. Williams 1997: 26.

each is involved, in one way or another, in the punishment of her tormentor; none of them is simply a victim.

Second, in all three plays, through a perversion of the usual process of wedding ritual, a woman receives into the house another woman intended by her errant husband to supplant her.³⁴ In Cassandra's case, Clytemnestra is genuinely the lady of the house: it is to her house that Agamemnon has brought the Trojan prisoner, and it is in her house where she will be struck down by a woman rather than marry a man. The Sophoclean plays use the same idea but with an additional twist: the 'receiving' woman is in front not of her own house, as we have seen, but of a dwelling in some foreign land to which she has been displaced. She welcomes – into a house that is not hers – the victim, not the bride, of the man who is not her son but her husband. The perversion of wedding ritual thus runs in triplicate, and continues to be explored in at least one of these plays, when at the end of *Trachiniae* Iole is assigned to a reluctant Hyllus not as his wife, but as his concubine: not as an act of kindness to her, but rather because Heracles regards her as his property to be disposed of according to his will; not by the father who would normally make such an assignation, but by the man who killed that father in order to seize his daughter.³⁵ But how *Tereus* explored the theme of marriage beyond what is noted above, if it did so at all, remains unknowable, at least for now.

Greek tragedy is full of lamentation, of both inarticulate cries and highly articulate expressions of distress, of loud and lengthy reactions to acts of appalling brutality. A whole book has been written with the title *The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy*;³⁶ the title of a subsequent essay by its author, 'Lament as speech act in Sophocles', emphasises the

³⁴ For the perversion (usually the welcoming was done by the groom's mother) see Seaford 1987: 128–9 = 2018: 294–6.

³⁵ MacKinnon 1971.

³⁶ Dué 2006.

link between lamentation and articulate speech.³⁷ Rape in particular was a crime that demanded a noisy response: the shouting of a woman at the time of her violation was regarded as important evidence that she was an unwilling participant in intercourse.³⁸ Yet in *Trachiniae* and *Tereus*, Sophocles presents us with two women who utter no sound at all, despite their recent traumatic experiences. That paradox is a central feature of *Trachiniae*, and seems to have been one in *Tereus* too, where, we may infer from the papyrus, the encounter between Procne and Philomela stood so close to – albeit with significant differences from – the Iole scene in the surviving play. Decades ago Webster claimed that ‘*Trachiniae* and *Tereus* must have been very much alike. Both had the diptych form; both dealt with the tragedy of a cultured woman married to a wild husband; in both the woman bewailed the lot of women. And there is close correspondence both of metre and thought between the choric fragments of the *Tereus* and the *parodos* of the *Trachiniae*’;³⁹ his claim has aged well, and, as we have seen, *Agamemnon* too deserves to be considered alongside both of these dramas, not just with *Trachiniae*. Let us hope that one day a further *Tereus* discovery will provide new insights, both into the relationship between these plays, and into Sophocles’ remarkable portrayal of female suffering.

³⁷ Dué 2012.

³⁸ Eur. *Tro.* 998–1001, Schulze 1918: 506–7 = 1966: 184–5; also Hom. *Il.* 2.355–6, 2.589–90 with H. Roisman 2006: 3, Soph. *Tr.* 565.

³⁹ Webster 1936b: 4. Webster went on to date both plays to the period shortly before 431, but there is no need to infer that they must have been composed at the same time, and most scholars today would place *Trachiniae* rather earlier than that (see n. 6 above on the date).